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ABSTRACT

When asked by the business department for a language component for its new area of concentration in international business, the modern language department of a small liberal arts college capitalized on a recently devised competence-based curriculum. The curriculum, established in the college's general education curriculum as an alternate track to the required communications competence component, consisted of a four-course sequence, including a contemporary culture and values course, geared to the attainment of practical communications competence and the development of critical and creative thinking skills. A state university has similarly emphasized the cultural aspects of international business in its major by requiring of its students a knowledge of the foreign country's customs and values, religion, philosophy, laws, politics, technology, education, and social organization. In both institutions, business language courses tailored to the business departments' specific needs are being required or developed. Both also have an assistant program with bilingual exchange students and international exchange programs. A satellite dish and complete video recording facilities were recently donated to the institutions, and foreign language teachers and international business students have begun to attend meetings of the local world trade association chapter. These minor adjustments to existing curricula have succeeded in internationalizing the programs. (MSE)

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INTERNATIONALIZING THE BUSINESS CURRICULUM: THE POINT OF VIEW OF A SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY

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Internationalizing the Business Curriculum: The Point of View of a Small Liberal Arts College and University

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As increasing numbers of undergraduates turn their serious attention to the Study of International Business with a view to Graduate School and an MBA in International Business, it behooves small foreign language departments to scrutinize closely the potentials for integration of language and culture components into the International Business Curriculum. We must produce, above all, undergraduates with practical foreign language competence, a broad knowledge of cultural perspectives, and flexible and innovative critical and creative thinking skills. This paper is presented from the point of view of the foreign language department at a small liberal arts college or university with limited resources and demonstrates our role in preparing students for Graduate School or for the international work arena.

When approached by the Business Department of Mars Hill College four years ago to contribute to its new International Business Area of Concentration, various departments immediately began making their contributions from courses already "on the books." The Business Administration section, for example, offered International Marketing which focuses on an analysis of cultural, legal,

and economic factors affecting the marketing of products and services in world markets. The Economics Section contributed its International Trade course, which examines the principles of inter-regional trade, foreign exchange, balance of payments, tariff policy, and world economic interdependence. This section also contributed a course on Comparative Economic Systems, a comparative economic analysis of capitalism, socialism, communism, and facism. Finally, the Political Science Department offered International Relations and World Politics, in which students analyze policies among nations, such as imperialism, balance of power, international morality, and sovereignty, along with problems of peace, disarmament, international organization, world government, and diplomacy. Offered as a valuable elective, although not an official part of the International Business Program, was a Great Decisions course, from the Political Science Department, featuring guest speakers with expertise in international politics in a forum of open discussion of contemporary world issues of critical importance. All of Mars Hill's International Business students must now major in Business Administration, and UNC-A's, in General Management.

When asked for a foreign language component for this International Business Area of Concentration, the Modern Foreign Language Department of Mars Hill College found itself in a fortuitous position to capitalize on several

resources which had been accumulating over the previous five years. These resources included first and foremost a carefully-formulated competence-based foreign language curriculum based on six areas of foreign language competence. The emphasis in this program was on learning outcomes determined by separate competence demonstrations or examinations for each area. Foreign language majors were expected to be able to converse with a person of native or near-native fluency, to be able to read and understand newspapers, magazines, and literary works written in the foreign language, and to be able to write an essay on a contemporary topic or a literary analysis in the foreign language. In addition, students were to understand the sound system and the structure of the foreign language, to be familiar with representative literary works of major periods, and to be able to analyze the society, economy, government, art forms, and history of the people speaking that language.

In order to help the students to begin reaching these practical goals from the very beginning, Mars Hill's Modern Foreign Language Department had already instituted three basic skills courses (12 cr. hrs.), and a fourth culture course in the language (3 cr. hrs.), which focused on contemporary culture and cultural values, with an attempt to integrate the historic culture of France or Spain or Latin America or Germany with the international role of

these regions today. As an added bonus, this particular portion of the foreign language track was already geared to the attainment of practical communications competence and to the development of critical and creative thinking skills in its capacity as the alternate track to the communications competence component (English, mathematics, and logic) of the General Studies curriculum required of all undergraduates. Therefore, International Business students were asked to demonstrate foreign language competence through the completion of these four courses in the foreign language sequence.

The program at the University of North Carolina at Asheville is quite similar, in that students studying International Business do so as a concentration under the existing major in General Management. The key to UNC-A's International Business track is, first and foremost, attention to the cultural aspects of International Business. In the view of the Business Department, the cultural aspects come first and are the key to the cultural environment of International Business. The Business Department requested of its students first, 18 hours of foreign language courses already existing. They require of their students a knowledge of the customs and values of the foreign country, its religion, philosophy, laws, politics, technology, education, and social organization. This knowledge is attained in the existing civilization courses. The Business

Department considers the business courses to be secondary to the language and culture studies. In addition, the UNC-A Business Department requires an International Marketing course (3 hours) of which one-half deals with cultural aspects of International Business and one-half treats the more technical aspects of taxes, negotiations, international monetary problems, etc. The UNC-A Business Department also has the ability to write a custom General Management Track in the Department itself; an International Business student would be required to take 24 hours in the International area, 18 of which must be the foreign language courses, 6 of which should be culture based. The student has 15 hours of electives, 3 of which are International Marketing, and other hours at choice. Other electives may include: International Economics, Comparative Economic Systems, International Marketing, Introduction to Global Politics, The Politics of the Third World, Contemporary Political Ideologies, Middle Eastern Political Systems, European Politics and Society, History of World Politics, and International Law.

At Mars Hill College, students also have to take a Business French, Spanish, or German course which gives an overview of business practices in the target language with emphasis on vocabulary and form. At UNC-A, the Business French course will begin next fall and will be tailored to the needs of the Business Department, i.e. the

Cultural "why's and how's" of doing business with the French, along with concrete details of form and function. We have found in both the Mars Hill and UNC-A courses that there are many worthy and unworthy texts of varying difficulty on the market. However, the Fontenilles-Heimerdinger La Vie des Affaires des Français is a practical, realistic choice for our students who are at a modest linguistic level. It remains a real concern for us that four courses in Basic Skills are insufficient for the Business Course level and we are working on the idea of encouraging the students to have an intensive language experience before experiencing the Business Course.

Other additional and invaluable resources have been included in the program on internationalizing the business curriculum from the point of view of enriched linguistic expertise or experience. Both schools have an assistant program with bilingual exchange students. The Mars Hill Studies Abroad Program, offering six to seven credit hours for a total immersion experience of six to eight weeks during the summer, began in 1981 with students studying at the Institut de Touraine and continued this past summer at the Université de Trois-Rivières, Trois-Rivières, Canada. At UNC-A, students travel annually to Quebec for a 2 week non-credit cultural awareness program, and this summer a group spent 5 weeks of immersion in Mexico City for 3 credit hours. Further programs are in the planning stages for

France and Peru this summer. These programs are fiscally self-sustaining. In these programs, students combine a formal study of the language with a study of culture in the target country.

Added to the Departments' final resource list were the welcome gifts of a satellite dish and complete video recording facilities for the existing language laboratory and three word processors for Humanities at Mars Hill. An entirely new laboratory has been purchased at UNC-A to accompany the existing video recording facilities at the Learning Resources Center. There is also a word processor for the Foreign Language Department. Obtaining these resources means that students can now view the evening news live from Montreal or Mexico City, along with film reviews, book reviews, topical programs of general cultural interest, business updates, and even feature-length films. The videotaping facilities provide much-needed flexibility of programming and ease in the scheduling of course work. Viewing varied programming in the foreign language contributes to aural comprehension at a level which the traditional language laboratory alone cannot attain. Cultural understanding is also greatly enhanced through the use of videotaped materials available free of charge from, for example, the Services Culturels, which have offered stimulating, interesting and well-done programs on current economic and political plans and policies. In addition,

the International Business student views and studies other vital aspects of language, such as nonverbal communication on television by viewing talk-shows. To gain such perspectives in the language classroom during the regular academic year creates opportunities and awarenesses of these cultural dimensions hitherto available only "on location."

During the past year, members of the Foreign Language Departments and some of the International Business students have begun attending meetings of the local chapter of the North Carolina World Trade Association interested in fostering increased awareness of international business opportunities in and for the Western North Carolina region. There are some 1200 foreign firms in North Carolina. We find that organizations such as these are highly interested in having students and faculty alike attend these meetings. We are currently formulating plans to add an Internship Program, whereby students can earn both foreign language and international business credit together with crucial practical experience in the field. Perhaps conferences such as these will help to facilitate progress in the area of internships, so needed by students.

We have approached our task by taking as our point of departure the philosophical stance that graduate programs in the U.S. and abroad cry out for students who are prepared, above all, with practical knowledge of language and culture

and with specific, concrete skills in linguistic competence. By focusing on highly pragmatic goals for our language component, we hope to produce well-prepared language speakers, students with down-to-earth, realistic cultural perspectives, and flexible, adaptable critical and creative thinking skills. We are contributing in a concrete and meaningful way to the internationalization of the business curriculum with only minor adjustments to our regular program and teaching loads, and we continue to remain well within the scope of our limited departmental resources.